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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

June 27, 1975

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To: The Secretary
From: AF - Edward W. Mulcahy, Acting

ETHIOPIA

Widespread Dissidence

You asked for a status report on Ethiopia at this morning's staff meeting. Ethiopia's Provisional Military Government (PMG) continues to be plagued by widespread sporadic dissidence, a great deal of it incited by the radical policies, such as land nationalization, which it has instituted. The latest element to enter into armed opposition was the Afar tribe which inhabits the lowlands of northeast Ethiopia and the neighboring French Territory of the Afars and Issas (FTAI). Negotiations with the PMG over the extent to which land nationalization should apply to the Afars led to fighting on June 1 and the once popular and influential Afar leader Ali Mirah is now in exile in Saudi Arabia from where he may continue to direct his tribesmen's dissidence, by means of intermediaries in the FTAI. Other areas of Ethiopia are experiencing trouble on a lesser scale. The increasing insecurity in the Ethiopian countryside has led us to remove our Peace Corps volunteers from several areas and to reduce the number of volunteers in-country.

Eritrean Insurgency

For the past several months there has been little activity in Eritrea. As foreseen earlier, the military situation there has evolved into a stalemate, with the Ethiopian military forces controlling Asmara and the other centers of populations and the insurgents controlling the countryside. There are recent indications, however, that the rebellion may be heating up. There was a rebel hit and run raid in Asmara city on June 21 - the first in two months, and a spokesman for the insurgent Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) has announced that ELF forces have surrounded 2,500 government troops near Asmara. We have no confirma-

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tion of this latter report but consider it logical that the insurgents should step up the fighting at this time in order to attract world attention prior to the next meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) scheduled to open on July 28 in Uganda. The government forces appear capable of containing any ELF activity. In spite of the continuing efforts of the Sudanese, there has been no progress toward negotiations.

U.S. Responsiveness to Ethiopia

We continue to be forthcoming in our dealings with the PMG. We should be able to deliver the F-5A fighter aircraft urgently desired by the Ethiopians within the next month, and we have offered to sell to the PMG 16 new F-5E aircraft, with deliveries scheduled to start next November. We are signing today a credit agreement for the \$25 million in Foreign Military Sales (FMS) credit which you allocated in January and which will be provided at a specially reduced interest rate. Our extensive AID program is continuing, with several new agreements having been signed recently. Assistant Secretary Davis revised his plans on short notice to include a visit to Ethiopia when the PMG changed signals and indicated it wanted him to come.

Ethiopian Attitudes Toward U.S.

The PMG has generally not been reciprocating. It constantly complains that we are doing too little too slowly in the military field, and attributes this to basic American hostility to Ethiopia's new socialism. It has been totally negative to suggestions made by Ambassador Hummel and other Ambassadors in Addis Ababa that it publicly announce a forthcoming position on Eritrean negotiations and that it permit the International Red Cross to operate in Eritrea.

Hanna Case

After repeated requests by Ambassador Hummel, supplemented by two demarches by Assistant Secretary Davis to

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the Ethiopian Charge here, that it release Richard Hanna, the American who has been in jail since January 9 without any charges made against him, the PMG has finally acquiesced, but at the time of the release issued an unhelpful statement that Hanna had been involved in espionage. The implication was inescapable that he was performing such espionage on behalf of the U.S. Government. Ambassador Hummel had categorically assured the PMG on several occasions that Hanna had not committed espionage for the U.S. Government and urged that this issue be downplayed. The manner of Hanna's release, after six months of detention, was but the latest way in which the PMG has flaunted our expressed hopes that this case not become a public issue to the possible detriment of continuing good U.S.-Ethiopian relations.

Visit by Assistant Secretary Davis

Assistant Secretary Davis is currently in Ethiopia for a three-day visit. During his stay he will be meeting a number of high-ranking officials, including especially the two most powerful members of the military regime, Major Mengistu and Lieutenant Colonel Atnaфу, the two Vice Chairmen of the ruling Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC). This will be the first occasion when an American official has had the opportunity to meet privately with these two men. The reception given Davis and his discussions with key officials should give us a good indication as to current Ethiopian attitudes towards the United States.

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